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SIX MONTHS UNDER THE YANKEE GUNS IN THE NURSERY OF DISUNION

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

Appalachian State Teachers College

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Thomas Thorpe McCaulley

August 1963

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From August 21, 1863 to February 18, 1865 Charleston, South Carolina was under bombardment from heavy Federal Batteries located on Morris Island. The Federal Army had landed on Morris in July of 1863 and was attempting to bring about the surrender of Charleston. The bombardment of the historic city was undertaken either to bring about the surrender of the city that saw the firing of the opening shots of the American Civil War or to lay Charleston in ruins.

The purpose of this study was to write the accounts of the damage done to the city by the shelling of the first six months. There has never been, to my knowledge, an account written of the bombardment and its effects upon Charleston. In the documentary research of this topic the South Carolina Historical Society and the South Carolina Library Society provided me with the personal letters, diaries, journals, and newspapers of the time involved. The Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the Civil War was quite helpful in the pursuit of information.

The conclusions reached as a result of this study were that Charleston was very definitely and severely damaged by the bombardment which it endured, but the city did not surrender as the result of the bombardment.



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## INTRODUCTION

The lower portions of the city, thus given up to be a prey and plunder, soon began to evince the most unmistakable appearance of dreariness and desolation. Some of the streets have become so covered with grass as to conceal the cobblestones beneath. I have seen cows and goats quietly pasturing where for years the highway had been worn by the corrosion of passing vehicles; I have seen the crow and the owl roosting where for years the tramp of horses and the rattle of cart-wheels were almost the only sounds to be heard; I have seen rank weeds springing from the gutters of streets which were once busy with the tide of passing men, to such a height as to almost exclude from view the opposite sidewalk. The highways of Heraculaneum and Pompeii never filled one with such a feeling of utter loneliness and desolation as some of the streets of the lower part of the City of Charleston.<sup>1</sup>

Charleston, South Carolina, by 1865, "a neglected City of the Dead,"<sup>2</sup> the older, lower end of the city devastated, was laid waste by the instruments of man and nature. Charleston, which possesses a distinctive atmosphere and charm, is a city where birth and name, not money, are the requirements for a high standing in society. When one strolls the streets of the proud city he sees the fine tooled wrought iron grillage, characteristic of the French Huguenot craftsmen that settled in Charleston, adorning the narrow balconies that hang out over the narrow and winding palmetto lined streets. The visitor is also aware of the contribution of the East Indies in the pastel painted single houses found throughout the old section of the city. Today when the visitor to the city witnesses the unique beauty and quietness

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<sup>1</sup>W. G. Peck, "Four Years Under Fire At Charleston," Harper's Monthly Magazine, XXXI (1865), 366.

<sup>2</sup>Arney R. Childs, Ed., Rice Planter and Sportsman: The Recollection of J. Motte Alston, 1821-1909 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), p. 135.

of Charleston he can not help but ask himself how could this city ever have been called a "City of the Dead"? By what course of events could the wanton destruction of such a peaceful city be achieved?



## CHAPTER I

For seventeen months from August, 1863, until February, 1865, Charleston was the target for the formidable batteries of the Army of the Abolition, commanded by Quincy A. Gillmore. During these seventeen months Charleston lived under the gun. Nearly four thousand Union shells landed in the city while 1400 shells failed to reach the city and fell harmlessly into the harbor.<sup>1</sup> On investigation I found that while accounts were kept on the bombardment, no one had yet written an account of what had happened to the city itself. Upon undertaking the investigation, I found such a wealth of information that, for reasons of economy, I shortened the scope of my investigation from seventeen months to six months. There were several problems that I encountered in my research. My biggest problem was the fact that the population, which fled from the lower regions of the city after the opening of the bombardment, did not keep accurate accounts of the damage being done. It seems that once it was evident that the bombardment would last for several months, the inhabitants of the lower part of the city did not return to their former

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<sup>1</sup>Major Alfred H. NonKolnity, The Battery in Charleston, South Carolina. Three Centuries of History (Charleston, Historical Commission of Charleston, 1937), p.91.

homes very often. Also, owing to a shortage of paper, there was not a great deal of personal writing going on. The two local papers, The Charleston Mercury and The Daily Courier, I was told, because of the shortage of paper did not want to devote a great deal of space to the daily damage of the bombardment as the local population could gauge the damage for themselves.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Granville Prior and Mrs. Harriet Powell of the South Carolina Historical Society, Mrs. Carolyn Rugheimer and her staff at the South Carolina Library Society, and the venerable Mr. Samuel G. Stoney for their assistance, interest, and succor.

Charleston is located on a narrow peninsula at the point where the Ashley and Cooper Rivers meet and enter the Atlantic Ocean to form Charleston Harbor. The entrance to the harbor is formed by two islands, Sullivans Island to the north and Morris Island to the south. Because a sand bar runs across the entrance to the harbor, it is necessary for a vessel to approach it from either a northerly direction or a southerly direction. Hence, an entering vessel must run parallel to either Sullivans Island or Morris Island.

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<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Carolyn Rugheimer, Librarian, The South Carolina Library Society, from conversation in January 1963.



for a time. At the narrowest point the width of the harbor entrance is 2,700 yards. Both Morris and Sullivans Island are low, narrow, and sandy, and each is about three and one half miles long. These islands are separated from the adjacent mainland by soft marshes which are too soft for practical use. Their distance from the mainland varies from three to one and a half miles. The marshes are crossed by deep and narrow winding creeks, and the marshes are covered with sea water by spring tides. The closest distance from these islands to the city itself is three and a half to four miles. The inner harbor is formed by James Island on the south and the mainland on the north.<sup>3</sup>

On September 15, 1862, General P.G.T. Beauregard took command of the defense of Charleston. General Beauregard felt that the defenses of Charleston were poorly located, inadequately armed, vulnerable at several points, and incomplete in some areas. The two strongest points of defense were Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie. Fort Sumter, located on a man-made island inside the harbor entrance, was armed with seventy-nine artillery pieces of various

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<sup>3</sup> U. S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Hereinafter referred to as Off. Rec.) Series I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), pp. 3-4.

calibers and seven ten-inch mortars. Fort Moultrie, on the southern end of Sullivans Island, was equipped with thirty-eight pieces of artillery. Also included in the system of defense for Charleston was Battery Beauregard, also on Sullivans Island, which protected the northern channel into the harbor with an armament of five cannons. On the west side of Sullivans Island there were under construction four batteries in sand barbettes. On Morris Island Battery Wagner was incomplete but when finished would have room for eleven guns and would guard the approach to Fort Sumter. On a sand projection into the harbor from Morris Island was established the "Neck Battery." In the interior of the harbor was Fort Ripley, also on a man-made island. It was not complete yet, but when finished would be armed with four artillery pieces. At the time only two were in place. Castle Pinckney is on an island in the Cooper River about a mile off the city. It would be of no aid to the defense of the city; however, it was armed with ten cannons. On the northern end of James Island is Fort Johnson. It was armed with only one piece of artillery. There were several batteries started within the city itself but none were finished in September, 1962. A defense line across James Island was inadequate, but it did contain twelve pieces

of artillery and two mortars. There was at this time a total of 12,547 members of the Confederate army stationed in South Carolina.<sup>4</sup>

By April of 1863 the defense of Charleston Harbor had been improved to the point of being almost impregnable to attack. The batteries protecting the harbor had been placed so as to form three circles of fire that would overlap and thus command the channels in the harbor. The first circle had Fort Sumter as its center with Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg, which had replaced the "Neck Battery," on Morris Island and Fort Moultrie backed up by a line of four successive batteries from the inner point of Sullivans Island to a point opposite the bar on the outside of the harbor. The second circle which was established on the inner harbor was composed of Johnson's Batteries Cheves, Wampler and Glover, and some minor earthen works on James Island, Fort Ripley, Castle Pinckney, one battery on Hog Island, and two batteries on Mount Pleasant. The third circle or line of fire was composed of a series of batteries in the city itself running from the southern

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<sup>4</sup>Beauregard, "The Defense of Charleston," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, (New York: The Century Co. 1884), III, pp. 1-2



tip of the city up the Cooper River.<sup>5</sup>

On April 6, 1863, eight union monitors and the New Ironsides crossed the sand bar opposite Morris Island and dropped anchor. The fleet was under the command of Admiral Samuel F. DuPont, who was aboard the New Ironsides. The plan of attack was to assault the northwest face of Fort Sumter with heavy cannon fire, and when Fort Sumter was silenced the fleet was to sail into the inner harbor. When the Union fleet gained entrance to the inner harbor, Charleston would be at the mercy of the fleet of ironclads. At 12 o'clock noon April 7, 1863, the fleet was given the signal to weigh anchor; however, the Weehawken fouled her anchor chain and the fleet did not get under way until 1:15. The fleet, once under way, made a line with the Weehawken first, then the Passaic, the Montauk, the Patapsco, the New Ironsides which was the Flagship, the Catskill, the Nantucket, the Nahant, and the Keokuk in that order. When the fleet passed Battery Wagner, there was no fire from either side. However, difficulty was encountered in the line. The approach of the fleet had to be slow because the Confederates had been planting obstacles and torpedoes (mines) in the harbor entrance as well as in the harbor

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<sup>5</sup>J. Thomas Scharf, History of the Confederate Navy (New York: Rogers and Sherwood, 1887), pp. 685-686.

itself. Because of the slowness of the approach and the draft of the heavy flat bottomed New Ironsides, she soon lost her steerage and was within one foot of the bottom. The New Ironsides dropped anchor to bring the vessel around into the tide again. The anchor was quickly raised, but before the New Ironsides could get under way again, she collided with the Catskill and the Nantucket. There was no damage to any of the vessels. The order was given for the lighter monitors to proceed and the New Ironside would follow. After the monitors passed, the New Ironsides moved into deeper water and passed directly over a large torpedo made of a boiler filled with powder and connected by electrical wires to Battery Wagner. The torpedo failing to explode, the New Ironside proceeded on to Fort Sumter. In the meantime, the leading four monitors had reached the channel buoy and Fort Moultrie fired the first shot at the Weehawken. The Passaic returned the fire. Following the opening shot from Fort Moultrie, Fort Sumter, Batteries Bee, Beauregard, and Wagner and all that could be brought to bear from Sullivan's Island opened fire. Before the lead vessel, the Weehawken, could enter the gorge of the harbor to engage the northwest wall of Fort Sumter, she came upon obstacles blocking her entrance. Upon coming to a halt to avoid the obstacles, the Weehawken lost her

steerage. The following monitors suffered the same misfortunes and the line was once again thrown into disorder. The New Ironsides, following at some distance, saw the problems ahead and cut her speed, but she lost steerage and again dropped anchor. The New Ironsides was, however, not participating in the battle raging ahead. The New Ironsides was not able to weigh anchor and get under way until 5 p.m. As of 5 p.m. the New Ironsides had not fired a shot in the battle. Admiral Samuel F. DuPont gave the order for withdrawal and as the New Ironsides drew out of range she fired a broadside at Fort Moultrie, which was returned.<sup>6</sup> Following the withdrawal order, the vessels returned to the anchorage of the prior day. The fleet had been under fire for a total of two and a half hours. During that time 2,209 shells had been fired at the Union's iron monsters by the Confederate Batteries while at the same time the Fleet was able to return only 154 rounds, which successfully struck Fort Sumter.<sup>7</sup> The right flank parapet was loosened and breached for a distance of about twenty-

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<sup>6</sup>Rear Admiral Rogers, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, pp. 34-37.

<sup>7</sup>Beauregard, op. cit., p. 12.



five feet. Elsewhere the wall was marked by craters up to two and a half feet deep. Fort Sumter remained secure and formidable.<sup>8</sup> Within Sumter, five men were wounded while at Fort Moultrie one man was killed by the flagstaff when it was shot away. Three men were killed and four wounded in Battery Wagner when an ammunition chest was exploded.<sup>9</sup>

When Admiral DuPont gave the retirement order his intent was to return the following morning to continue the battle, for he ordered the mechanics to repair the ships during the night. However, after dark the commanders of the monitors went on board and gave their damage reports. Admiral DuPont still did not change the battle order until the following morning. The most severely damaged of all the vessels was the Keokuk.<sup>10</sup> She had come within nine hundred yards of Sumter's batteries and was badly beaten.<sup>11</sup> The Keokuk was struck ninety-nine times, nineteen of the hits at or below the water line. At about 8:30 on the morning of April 8 she rolled over on her side and sank. The

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<sup>8</sup>Frank Barnes, Fort Sumter National Monument South Carolina Historical Series (Washington: National Park Service, 1952), No. 12 p. 25.

<sup>9</sup>Beauregard, op.cit., p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Rogers, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>11</sup>Beauregard, op. cit., p. 11.

Weehawken was struck fifty-three times. Her deck was pierced, and she was taking on water. Also her turret was operating with difficulty because of the severe blows. The Passaic was struck thirty-five times which disabled her gun early, and the turret operated with considerable difficulty owing to a direct hit from a rifled shell. The pilot house of the Passaic was also severely damaged. The Nantucket was hit fifty-one times, her turret disabled after the third discharge, her deck pierced, and her side plates severely damaged. The Nahant was badly mauled. In receiving thirty-six hits her turret was knocked out of operation. A seventy-eight pound piece of steel flying about in the pilot house killed the quartermaster, struck down the pilot, and disabled the steering gear. The Montauk, the Patapsco, and the Catskill were struck a total of eighty-one times. They were badly damaged. The only damage sustained by the New Ironsides in the ninety-five times she was struck was to have a port shutter shot away and the unarmoured ends pierced. Realizing the defeat and not wishing to turn the defeat into a disaster, Admiral DuPont called off the plans for the next attack.<sup>12</sup>

Conditions on April 17 were ideal for the Confederate gunners. The water was as stable as a slow moving river,

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<sup>12</sup>Rodgers, op. cit., pp. 36-40.

and there was neither wind nor cloud in the sky. The Confederate gunners were able to fire with slow deliberation, which proved to the people in Charleston as well as to the Confederate military that the monitors were not innumerable nor invincible.<sup>13</sup> The effectiveness of the Confederate fire can also be attributed to the fact the monitors were too slow and unwieldy for action in such a limited space as that in which they operated on the assault of April 7. Because they lay low in the water they were also vulnerable to plunging fire such as they received from the Confederate batteries.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time the fleet was being defeated in its attempt to silence Fort Sumter and bring Charleston to its knees, a force with eight pieces of artillery under General Israel Vogdes was being landed unopposed on Folly Island. General Vogdes' orders were to place a battery on the southern end of Folly for the purpose of protecting Stono Inlet and the mouth of the Stono River. This defensive function was to be carried out by General Vogdes with no difficulties encountered. It was so quiet that Yankee pickets on Folly Island would hold conversation with the

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<sup>13</sup>Beauregard, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Barnes, op. cit., p. 25.



Rebel pickets on Morris Island across Lighthouse Inlet.<sup>15</sup> However, things changed on June 15, 1863. Three days earlier General Quincy A. Gillmore had replaced Major General David Hunter as the commanding officer of the Department of the South. On June 15 General Gillmore paid a visit to Folly Island and ordered General Vogdes to plant secretly behind the sandhills on the northern end of Folly Island batteries of sufficient strength to disable the opposing Confederate batteries on the southern end of Morris Island within one hour's time of firing.<sup>16</sup> The plan was to capture Morris Island and take the battery. Wagner was to silence Fort Sumter and have the monitors enter the Harbor and force Charleston to surrender. In control of Folly Island, the next logical step would be to cross Lighthouse Inlet, land on Morris Island with naval support, and carry Morris Island. Within seventeen days there were secretly built on the north end of Folly Island ten batteries in two lines armed with forty-seven pieces of artillery and mortars.<sup>17</sup> These ten

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Stuart Davis, "Three Months Around Charleston Bar" U. S. Service Magazine, March 1864, Vol. I.

<sup>16</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. 2, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Stuart, op. cit., p. 174.

batteries were constructed from eight hundred to twelve hundred yards from the Confederate batteries. There were thirty-two rifled cannons and fifteen siege mortars.<sup>18</sup>

The assault on Morris Island was scheduled for the morning of July 8. On July 17 General Terry with his division, about 4,000 men, under navy convoy were to ascend the Stono River and make a strong demonstration on James Island in an attempt to draw Confederate troops off Morris Island. Under the cover of darkness Brigadier General Strong was to embark his battalion, 2,500 men, into boats on Folly Creek. At daybreak the secret batteries were to open fire and Brigadier General Strong's brigade was to cross Lighthouse Inlet and land on Morris Island. Because of weather conditions the assault had to be postponed until the morning of July 10. The entire union force on Folly Island numbered about 11,000 men. About one o'clock on the morning of the 9th Strong's Brigade embarked into the boats. They were supported by four navy howitzer launches under Lieutenant Commander Francis W. Bunce.<sup>19</sup> The confederate defenses on the southern end of Folly Island were held by about 400 men,

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<sup>18</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. 2, p. 349.

<sup>19</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. I, pp. 10-11.

350 of whom were the 21st South Carolina Volunteers under R. F. Graham.<sup>20</sup> About four o'clock on the morning of July 10, the monitors, Catskill, Montauk, Nahant, and Weehawken, moved across the bar and took up positions opposite Morris Island.<sup>21</sup> At five o'clock the batteries on Folly Island opened; they fired rapidly until eight o'clock. The monitors joined the fray at six o'clock. At approximately eight o'clock the Union barrage lifted and the Union troops were landing on Morris Island.<sup>22</sup> The majority of the troops landed on the western point of Morris Island but the Sixth Connecticut Regiment passed in front of the Confederate batteries and landed on the eastern sea side of Morris.<sup>23</sup> Upon landing, the troops formed up and began taking battery after battery until nine o'clock at which time three-fourths of Morris Island was in the control of the Union forces. The assault halted about six hundred yards short of Battery Wagner where Morris Island narrows down to about sixty yards in width.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> C. B. Boynton. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of Rebellion. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), Vol. 14, Series I, p. 320.

<sup>22</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. 2, pp. 10-13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 354.



The casualties to the Union forces were one officer and fourteen enlisted men killed and one officer and ninety enlisted men wounded for a total of 106 men killed and wounded. The Confederates lost 300 men, including sixteen officers killed, wounded, and captured. The Confederates also lost eleven pieces of ordinance, eight cannons, and three mortars.<sup>24</sup>

The success of the assault on July 10 can be attributed to the effectiveness of the artillery barrage in keeping the Confederates out of the gun pits, the overwhelming numbers of the union forces, and the close cooperation between the navy and the army. Beauregard did not choose to counter-attack because of the number of troops needed for a successful counterattack he estimated to be about 4,000. The Confederates lacked adequate transportation to get the men to and off Morris Island. Moreover, the end of Morris Island that they held was not large enough to protect 4,000 men much less allow them to maneuver properly.<sup>25</sup>

During the night of July 10 General Gillmore decided that on the following morning Fort Wagner would be attacked. The attack would be led by four companies of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteers. They would be followed by the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

Seventy-Sixth Pennsylvania and the Ninth Maine Regiment at proper intervals. The assault began as planned, but when the Seventh Connecticut came within two hundred yards of Wagner they were met with withering fire. The Seventh Connecticut kept on but the Seventy-Sixth Pennsylvania faltered and although they got up and continued the attack the interval was lost. The Seventh Connecticut was able to gain the top of the parapet. However, owing to the loss of time by the faltering of the Seventy-Sixth Pennsylvania, the Ninth Maine along with the Seventy-Sixth Pennsylvania were driven from the battle by the withering fire from Wagner. The Seventh Connecticut were able to hold the parapet for about fifteen minutes, but because they had lost their supporting groups they were forced to give up their position and retreat under deadly fire.<sup>26</sup>

The Seventh Connecticut went into the battle with one hundred ninety-six men, of whom thirteen were killed, twenty-nine wounded, and sixty-one missing for a total of one hundred out of one hundred ninety-six. The Ninth Maine lost fifty-six men, and the Seventy-Sixth Pennsylvania had thirty-five killed, sixty-two wounded, and eighty-three missing for a total of one hundred eighty.<sup>27</sup> At the same time

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 355-356.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

the Confederate forces had six men killed and six wounded.<sup>28</sup>

The repulse of the Union attack of July 11 resulted in General Gillmore's re-evaluating Fort Wagner a formidable fortification, the strength of which had been underestimated. General Gillmore ordered that construction begin immediately on counter batteries against Fort Wagner.<sup>29</sup> Four batteries, completed by July 17, contained twenty-seven rifled cannons and nineteen siege mortars. The closest battery to Wagner was at a distance of 1330 yards. The farthest battery from Wagner was 1,920 yards. On July 18 at sunset there would be a second assault by infantry against Fort Wagner. The newly established batteries were assigned a strategic task in the upcoming assault. The rifled guns were to dismount the Confederate guns within the Fort. In order to be more effective gunners were ordered not to fire when their view of Fort Wagner was obliterated by smoke. The mortars were to fire time fuse and percussion shells at five minute intervals directly over the Fort. This was to keep the defenders within the bomb proofs and off the parapet.<sup>30</sup>

Because of high winds the artillery barrage of Fort

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 14.



Wagner did not open until twelve noon on the eighteenth.<sup>31</sup> Once the bombardment started the shells falling on Fort Wagner averaged fourteen a minute and totaled approximately 9,000 shells before the assault.<sup>32</sup> The attack against Fort Wagner was under the command of Brigadier General Truman Seymour, who used three brigades in the assault. The leading regiment was to be the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, an entire colored regiment. At about 7:45 p.m. the first brigade left the parallels and advanced on the fort with fixed bayonets. The order was that they not use their muskets but only their bayonets. The covering bombardment was lifted when the advance began. Soon after the bombardment lifted the first brigade was submitted to a terrifying fire of grape and cannister shot as well as musketry fire. Losses in the first brigade were severe and confusion reigned. Brigadier Seymour ordered the Second Brigade to advance; however, the commander of the Second Brigade, Colonel Holdimand Putnam, refused to advance on the grounds that General Gillmore had told him to hold. After an interval and the apparent high losses being suffered by the First Brigade Colonel Putnam ordered his brigade forward. In the meantime elements of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

the first brigade had reached Fort Wagner.<sup>33</sup> Because of a cowardly retreat of the 31st North Carolina Regiment within the Fort from their position on the southeast angle, elements of the First Brigade were able to enter the fort.<sup>34</sup> The Second Brigade's 100th New York Regiment, 67th Ohio Regiment, 48th New York Regiment, and 6th Connecticut Regiment led by Colonel Putnam gave support to the men who held a foothold in the fort. However, after an hour they had to withdraw from their advantage within the fort owing to a lack of support.<sup>35</sup> The Union army had two hundred forty-six men killed, eight hundred eighty wounded, and three hundred eighty-nine captured for a total of 1,515 men.<sup>36</sup> At the same time the defenders suffered losses of one hundred seventy-four men killed and wounded.<sup>37</sup>

After the second repulse from taking Fort Wagner General Gillmore elected to follow a two-fold plan. First, sappers would begin to dig a series of trenches angling toward Wagner which would allow the installation of mortars

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

and provide for the protection of the infantry from direct artillery fire. Secondly, Fort Sumter would be demolished by cannonading from the positions already held. Since Fort Wagner was an outpost of Fort Sumter, once Sumter was destroyed there would be no reason for Wagner to be held by the Rebels.<sup>38</sup> The reduction of Fort Sumter to a pile of ruins was achieved by two great bombardments by the Union batteries. The first great bombardment of Fort Sumter lasted from September 8 to September 15. At the end of the second bombardment the Fort was little more than a pile of rubble.<sup>39</sup> While Fort Sumter was being bombarded the regular approaches against Fort Wagner were being pursued. By August 27 the parallels were within one hundred yards of Wagner. Here the sappers were slowed down considerably by a heavy concentration of fire from the Confederate batteries.<sup>40</sup> At this point it was decided, with Fort Sumter substantially reduced, to bring the breaching cannons to bear against Fort Wagner. Also, in order to keep Wagner silent, Gillmore would overpower Fort Wagner by use of curved fire. This he achieved by improving the fifth parallel, about 340 yards from Wagner, bringing up mortars, and placing sharpshooters in the fifth

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 24.



parallel. In order to lighten up the night so Fort Wagner could be more effectively bombarded, Gillmore employed a calcium light.<sup>41</sup> By September 6, 1863, the plan was working as General Gillmore had anticipated that it would work. Colonel L. M. Kiet, the Confederate commander of Fort Wagner, reported on September 6 that the fire from the Union batteries, together with the reverse fire from the Union fleet, kept his men from their positions and to return the Union fire was impossible. Also, the fort was badly weakened and another day of bombardment would reduce Fort Wagner to ruins. The use of the calcium light at night by the Union forces made it impossible to repair the damage to the fort. On the night of September 5 sixty to eighty men were lost in an attempt to repair Fort Wagner. At 10:30 on the morning of September 6 Colonel Keit requested that boats be brought to Cummings Point for the evacuation of his men or they would all be lost. The evacuation of the garrison of Fort Wagner started at nine o'clock on the evening of September 6 and was completed by 1:30 the next morning.<sup>42</sup>

General Gillmore planned his third assault against Fort Wagner from the trenches, which were now within sixty

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90.

yards of Fort Wagner, for the morning of September 7. However, at midnight on the sixth he received word that Wagner was being evacuated. His forces were able to prevent only forty-six Confederates from escaping.<sup>43</sup>

The efforts to capture Morris Island were initiated by the Union attack of July 10. The Island was not completely taken until September 7. During this time the Union forces suffered losses of 2,318 men killed, wounded, and captured.<sup>44</sup> At the same time the Confederate losses amounted to 641 men killed, wounded, or captured.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

## CHAPTER II

While the Yankee forces under General Quincy A. Gillmore were still attempting to dislodge the Confederate defenders in Fort Wagner, the order was given by General Gillmore to investigate the marsh separating Morris Island from James Island for the possibility of constructing a battery.

The reconnaissance task was given to Colonel Edward W. Serrell of the Volunteer Engineers.<sup>1</sup> On July 16 Colonel Serrell reported that he and Lieutenant V. M. Edwards had investigated the marsh that morning and had found a suitable location for a battery between Morris Island and Lighthouse Creek about one-half mile from the closest hard ground. At low tide infantry could with some difficulty cross the marsh to reach this location. A battery built here would have to be made up entirely of sand bags with platform grillaged, and because of the activity of the Confederate batteries work would have to be done at night.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Serrell undertook subsequent examinations down the stream that ran between Lighthouse Creek and Vincent's Creek. Colonel Serrell was ordered by General Gillmore to design a battery that would

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<sup>1</sup>Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. I, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

contain a 200-pound Parrot Cannon. He was also ordered to find a site as close to the city of Charleston as possible. On the morning of August 2 Colonel Serrell submitted to General Gillmore the plan for the Marsh Battery. Colonel Serrell was then asked to make an estimation of the labor necessary to construct such a battery. On the night of August 2, upon Colonel Serrell's report of the labor necessary to build the Marsh Battery, General Gillmore ordered the construction of the battery on the bank of the creek.

The major problem was to determine how large the foundation would have to be to hold up the parapet in the eighteen feet of mud. Because the parapet would have to be a certain height and thickness, Colonel Serrell decided to make it of sand bags which would rest on a grillage of yellow pines crossed and bolted together. The center of gravity of the battery would be the gun platform which would be within the parapet, yet completely independent of the structure of the parapet. In this manner the gun platform would be elevated by the displacement of the heavier battery. If the parapets were to sink on their foundation the gun would be left on its platform floating in the mud, and sand bags could be piled indefinitely upon the sunken epaulement to form the battery.



The gun platform was a rectangular figure of piling driven through the eighteen feet of mud into the sand bottom beneath. Upon the pilings was laid a layer of the natural grass of Morris Island, which was thoroughly trampled. Upon this was placed a double thickness of a tarpaulin covered with a fifteen-inch layer of well packed sand. Three diagonal layers of yellow pine were placed on the sand with the top layer running parallel to the line of fire. Up to August 12 all materials and many of the work details reached the site of the construction in boats by way of the creek. After the night of the twelfth a road was opened from Morris Island to the Marsh Battery.

In the construction of the Marsh Battery the following materials were used: 13,000 sand-bags; 123 pieces of yellow pine timbers fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter and forty-five to fifty five feet long; 5,000 feet of one inch boards; eight tarpaulins eighteen by twenty-eight feet each; 9,156 feet of three inch-pine planks; 300 pounds of seven inch and 300 pounds of four inch spikes and nails; 600 pounds of round and square iron, and 75 fathoms of three inch rope. The labor expended in the construction of the battery was as follows: 91 days of work for engineer officers, 1,384 days for engineer soldiers, 7,390 days for infantry, 172 days for four-horse teams, and 92 days for the boats.

The average pressure on the foundation of the battery was 513 pounds pressure to the square foot. The average pressure of the gun deck was 123 pounds to the square foot.

On the night of August 17 the Marsh Battery was ready for the 200-pound Parrott Rifle Cannon that would become known as the "Swamp Angel." The task of putting the gun in place was given to Lieutenant Wadlie of the Third New Hampshire Volunteers and Lieutenant Parsons of the Volunteer Engineers. The timber parts and the iron work of the carriage were carried to the site of the battery in boats. The 16,500-pound gun, capable of throwing a 150 pound projectile over five miles was taken to its resting place on a skid, which was dragged across the marsh by way of the recently constructed causeway. The gun was in place and ready to fire by August 20.<sup>3</sup>

With the Marsh Battery completed and the "Swamp Angel" in place waiting to speak to the people of Charleston, General Gillmore on August 21 wrote the following letter:

Headquarters  
Department of the South  
Morris Island, South Carolina  
August 21, 1863

General G. T. Beauregard  
Commanding Confederate Forces  
Charleston, South Carolina

General:

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<sup>3</sup>Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. 1, pp. 230-236.

I have the honor to demand of you the immediate evacuation of Morris Island and Fort Sumter by the confederate forces. The present condition of Fort Sumter and the rapid and progressive destruction which it is undergoing from my batteries seem to render its complete demolition within a few hours a matter of certainty. All my heaviest guns have not yet opened. Should you refuse compliance with this demand, or should I receive no reply thereto within four hours after it is delivered into the hands of your subordinate at Fort Wagner for transmission, I shall open fire on the city of Charleston from Batteries already established within easy and effective range of the heart of the city.

I am, General, very respectfully your obedient servant,

Q. A. Gillmore  
Brigadier-General, commanding<sup>4</sup>

The above letter was received in General Beauregard's headquarters at 10:45 p.m. on August 21 by Brigadier General Thomas Jordan, Chief of Staff. General Beauregard was out of his headquarters at the time on an inspection tour of the fortifications. Owing to the fact that General Gillmore had not signed the letter, General Jordan returned the letter for General Gillmore's signature.<sup>5</sup>

Without a formal introduction, at about 1:30 a.m. on August 22, 1863, the "Swamp Angel" fired upon Charleston from the Marsh Battery. The city of Charleston was asleep, but those inhabitants who were awake suddenly heard an

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Pt. II., Sec P. 57-58.



unusual sound that reminded some of the whistle of a steam engine or an iron-clad vessel. The quiet was shattered, along with the ideas of a steam whistle, by the unmistakable violent explosion of an artillery shell. The city of Charleston, the nursery of disunion, was under the gun! In a few minutes people were in the streets, but some were not awakened until the fire bell began to clang. Soon the streets were crowded with the populace intent upon fleeing the deadly missiles. Of particular note to observers was the large number of women and children in the fleeing throng. It was estimated that thirteen shells were fired within the three hours the Swamp Angel was in action that morning. One shell fell in a lot on King Street. Another fell at the corner of Rutledge Avenue and Queen Street tearing a large hole in the planked street and another in the yard of Mrs. McLauren on Meeting Street. One shell landed in the Walker's Marble Yard on Anson Street. The fifth shell damaged the Burckmeyer Cotton Press on Hayne Street. The sidewalk in front of Mrs. Ravenal's house on the Battery was shattered.<sup>6</sup> Another shell entered the warehouse of G. W. Williams and Co. at the corner of Hayne and Church Street by way of the roof and exploded in the top floor, the explosion ripping a large hole in the

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<sup>6</sup>The Burckmeyer Letters; 1863-1865 (Columbia: The State Co., 1926), pp. 161-163.



Medical Purveyor's storehouse next door. Some loose packing material was ignited and about \$1500 worth of medical supplies were destroyed in the ensuing fire, which was soon extinguished. One shell fell short and did not reach the city, while the rest fell in vacant lots and failed to explode, leaving only a hole in the earth to mark their passing.<sup>7</sup>

On the morning of August 22 a great many people were in the streets trying to see the damage done to the city. There was also a general exodus of people not only from lower sections of the city but from the city itself. Because no shell fell farther into the city than Hayne Street, the lower part of the city was evacuated and "up-town" was the rage of the day. The streets were crowded with carriages and carts loaded with women and children and personal effects. The railroad depot was a scene of much confusion and sorrow as trains departed loaded with women and children who were leaving their husbands and fathers behind. It was a most touching scene, filled with tears, that lasted all day Saturday and Sunday.<sup>8</sup> Speaking from a military standpoint the mass exodus from downtown Charleston was a boon, for it

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<sup>7</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, August 24, 1863, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> The Burckmeyer Letters. op. cit., p. 163.

removed a great many noncombatants from under the feet of the Confederate defenders.<sup>9</sup>

At 9:00 a.m., August 22, 1863, the letter written by General Gillmore the night before was again received in the headquarters of General Beauregard with General Gillmore's signature affixed. On the same day General Beauregard wrote an answer to General Gillmore and in a chiding manner charged General Gillmore with violations against humanity as well as the laws of war. General Beauregard also pledged that if this mode of warfare were used again before allowing a reasonable time for the removal of noncombatants, he would retaliate with the most stringent means available. He refused to give up either the works on Morris Island or Fort Sumter.

General Gillmore replied to the charges and pledges of General Beauregard in a letter dated 9 p.m., August 22. In this letter he pledged that the shelling of the city would not be resumed until 11 p.m., August 23, to allow for the removal of noncombatants.

About 12 p.m., August 23, the Swamp Angel again began belching forth her missiles of death and destruction. Fourteen

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<sup>9</sup>Daniel E. Huger Smith, Alice R. Huger Smith, and Arney R. Childs, Eds., Mason Smith Family Letters 1860-1868, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950), p. 56.

incendiary shells were thrown at the city at intervals of fifteen minutes for approximately three hours.<sup>10</sup> Six buildings were struck, but fortunately no one was injured.<sup>11</sup> It seems that the incendiary shells, called Greek Fire, were not detonating upon impact, thus doing little damage. Mr. C. L. Burckmeyer, who lived at 26 Society Street, was awakened by a loud noise and upon inspection found that a shell had entered a shed attached to his residence. Fortunately the shell did not explode. The house directly across the street, vacated by Mrs. Myers, was struck by a shell that entered through the back garret and descended through the house to the sidewalk, badly damaging the house. Some of the debris from the Myers home had covered the Burckmeyer steps and had broken away a portion of the Burckmeyers' carriage gate. While Mr. Burckmeyer was inspecting the damage a crowd gathered. However, he soon found himself alone when another shell exploded over the Artesian Well. Not a shell was thrown above Society Street. The streets were once again reverberating with the prattle of fleeing women and children.<sup>12</sup>

The Charleston Mercury of August 22 reported that the exact source of the shells fired into the city in the early

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<sup>10</sup>The Charleston Mercury, August 25, 1863, p. 2., Col. 1.

<sup>11</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, August 25, 1863, p. 1. Col. 2.

<sup>12</sup>The Burckmeyer Letters. op. cit., p. 164.



morning hours of the same day was a baffling mystery. The proposed answers were (1) from a mud battery built in the marsh of Morris Island, (2) from a battery on Godberry Hill on Morris Island, and (3) from a floating battery which was sneaking in the creeks between Morris and James Islands.<sup>13</sup> Chief of the Fire Department, M. H. Nathan, announced that all housekeepers and citizens were requested to keep a tub of water ready on their premises to use in case of a bursting shell.<sup>14</sup> Chief Nathan also ordered that all persons holding cotton were to have it removed from the city limits as it presented a danger during the bombardment.<sup>15</sup>

After the shelling of the city on the night of August 23 the populace of Charleston was never again to receive messages from the angel of destruction in the marsh, for on the thirty-sixth firing she burst. Although there are recorded only twenty-seven rounds fired at the city itself, the gun did fire nine rounds at Fort Sumter. The most serious problem of the rifled Parrott cannon was the unequal endurance of the different pieces. The "Swamp Angel" up to the time of her bursting had fired thirty-five 150-pound projectiles at

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<sup>13</sup>The Charleston Mercury, August 22, 1863, p. 2, Col. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Col. 4.

<sup>15</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, August 25, 1863, p. 2, Col. 2.



an elevation of thirty-one degrees and thirty minutes with a constant charge of sixteen pounds of powder. The bombardment of the city was not resumed again until the abolition army was able to establish effective guns on Cumming's Point.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, in the city the exodus of women and children from the downtown area was followed by that of the business concerns. On Monday, August 24, H. P. Walker, Esquire, the Acting British Consul ran an advertisement in the Daily Courier announcing that he had moved to the Belvedere farm.<sup>17</sup> On the days following more businessmen vacated their locations in the lower parts of the city and moved out of the range of the "Swamp Angel."

The landmarks that were apparently used for sighting gunfire on the city were the steeples of St. Michael's Episcopal Church on the corner of Meeting and Broad Streets and St. Phillip's Episcopal Church on Church Street.<sup>18</sup> St. Michael's steeple was in fact being used as a post from which the Union forces at Charleston's door could be scrutinized. Near the top of the steeple there was fixed for an observer a room

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<sup>16</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I. Vol. XXVIII, pt. 2. pp. 30-32.

<sup>17</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, August 24, 1863, p. 2, Col. 2.

<sup>18</sup> George W. Williams, St. Michaels Charleston 1751-1951, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), p. 97.

with a stove for warmth and a powerful telescope. It was manned night and day, and all movements of the Union forces were recorded.<sup>19</sup> The observer in St. Michael's steeple at the onset of the bombardment of Charleston was T. S. Hale.<sup>20</sup>

With the sudden evacuation of the lower part of the city the demand for modes of transportation understandably drove the price of carts and wagons high. On August 27, 1863, the mayor's office issued a proclamation on the charging of high fares for moving people. This proclamation was precipitated by a great number of complaints on the unreasonably high freight fares being registered with the mayor. The mayor's proclamation of August 27 stated that anyone demanding more than a reasonable rate for his services would be fined for every offense regardless of whether he was a free person or a white. If the offender was a slave, the fine was to be levied against his master or employer. Failures to pay the fine were punishable in some other manner.<sup>21</sup>

By the closing days of August most of the residents of the lower section of the city had either taken up residence

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<sup>19</sup>W. G. Peck, "Four Years Under Fire at Charleston" Harper's Monthly Magazine, Vol. 31, (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1865), p. 363.

<sup>20</sup>Clement A. Evans, ed., Confederate Military History, Vol. V, (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899), p. 297.

<sup>21</sup>The Charleston Mercury. August 27, 1863, p. 2, Col. 4.

above Calhoun Street or had left the city entirely for summer homes or for the homes of friends and relatives. Practically all of the business concerns in the area under fire had moved to safer quarters. For the first time the people who saw the first shots of the rebellion fired were feeling the spirited vengeance of their enemy. The reactions of the people of Charleston were varied and interesting. At this particular time in the siege the feeling most prevalent among the people can best be seen in the following quotation from a letter written on August 25, 1863, by Augustine T. Smythe to his aunt. At this time Augustine T. Smythe was serving in the Confederate Signal Corps on the C. S. S. Palmetto State in Charleston Harbor.

The Yankees did not have as easy a job as they anticipated and when they had taken Morris Island and Sumter even they had but just begun. The spirit prevailing was to fight to the last, and the conflict was expected to be a bloody one when it came. It was anticipated that the enemy would shell the city, no doubt would, but taking possession of it was quite a different thing.<sup>22</sup>

There was also a rumor in the city that there was to be some sort of extraordinary gun put up on the Battery to silence the weapons firing on the city.<sup>23</sup> Along with the

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<sup>22</sup>The A. T. Smythe War Letters 1860-1863 (Hereinafter Referred To As A. T. Smythe War Letters), MSS. South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

<sup>23</sup>T. F. Shirmer, Shirmer Diary. August 1863. (MSS South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.)



unconquerable spirit and the desire for revenge there was also in Charleston an air of anticipation. In some quarters the people felt that Gillmore had satisfied himself with the knowledge that he possessed guns that could reach the city, and that since the ceasing of firing on August 24 he was busy planting a battery of heavy guns in place to open a terrific fire against the city.<sup>24</sup>

Regardless of the dauntless spirit of the people in Charleston, the fact remained that the city had felt the revenging sting of the men who had been taken from their homes to fight a war they did not initiate. And because of the presence and use of the weapons of destruction capable to reach into the nursery of disunion, the lives of Charlestonians as well as Charleston were altered. By October 12, 1863, forty-one days after the first shelling of the city and thirty-nine days since the last shell had fallen in the city an inhabitant had this to say.

The city looks like a great camp, soldiers and mulattoes being almost the only persons one sees in the streets. A few evenings ago I started for the battery and sauntered down Meeting Street between 5 and 6 o'clock. I got as far as Water Street and found everything so desolate and so much the appearance

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<sup>24</sup> A. T. Smythe War Letters, August 30, 1863.



of a 'City of the Dead' that I had not the heart to continue and turned back homeward.<sup>25</sup>

Yes, Charleston had felt the wrath of enraged men, but she was yet to experience the full weight of the storm. On November 16, 1863, the Yankee guns were to earnestly resume their task of laying the cradle of the rebellion to waste.

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<sup>25</sup>The Burckmeyer Letters, op. cit., p. 192.

### CHAPTER III

After the completed evacuation of Morris Island during the early morning hours of September 7, 1863, Charleston was to have a period of peace in which she could lick her wounds and in some way prepare for the anticipated onslaught. By September 17, the evacuation of Charleston by noncombatants had dwindled noticeably, and many who had left returned or were attempting to return to the city.<sup>1</sup> The quiet that had shrouded the harbor as well as Charleston was shattered on Monday, September 27, at 3:30 p.m. when heavy Parrott guns located on Morris Island's Gadberry Hill threw several shells at the ruins known as Fort Sumter.<sup>2</sup> The city, however, was left to its peace and quiet. By the end of September it was evident to the people in Charleston that they were marked for further messengers of destruction from the Army of Abolition, for several new embrasures were opened in Battery Gregg that were definitely aimed at the city.<sup>3</sup> The interval of peace and safety that Charleston was undergoing was due to the work being done on Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg by the Union

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Abbott and Elmer Puryear. "Beleagured Charleston," "Letters From the City, 1860-1864." South Carolina Historical Magazine, Vol. 61, (1960) p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Tuesday, September 29, 1863. p. 2, Col. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Wednesday, September 30, p. 2, Col. 1.

forces. The bastions that had been constructed to defend the city were now being converted into resting places for the instruments that would eventually devastate Charleston.

On October 12 rumors began flying around the city that the Yankees had resumed the bombardment of Charleston. These rumors were precipitated by the explosion on Southern Wharf of two Yankee shells. One of the shells was a fifteen-inch round shell (ball) and the other a 200-pound Parrott shell thrown into the city while the Confederates were still in Fort Wagner. The shells were triggered when a boy inserted a hot iron into one of them. As a result of the explosion two white boys and one Negro boy were killed immediately. Another boy had a leg blown off and died on the way to a hospital. The walls, doors, and windows of buildings in the area were shattered as well as a nearby telegraph pole. In the nearby telegraph office Mr. R. L. Millian, a telegraph operator, was injured in his right hand by pieces of flying glass. Shell fragments were thrown up to 800 yards. One shell fragment passed through a brick wall and entered the W. C. Bee and Company Counting House. Another fragment shattered the brick street in front of the H. A. Dessaussure residence on Meeting Street. Still another shell fragment went through the roof of a kitchen on Church Street.<sup>4</sup> Unexploded

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<sup>4</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier. Tuesday, October 13, 1863.

Union shells were saved and taken to the various city foundaries where they were deactivated by flushing out the powder with water. Following deactivation the shells were melted down for their much needed metal.<sup>5</sup>

On October 13, 1863, in The Charleston Mercury was printed information that recently taken Union prisoners had disclosed that the batteries in Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg would not be completed for two weeks. There were four guns in Wagner and one at Gregg, all 300-pound Parrotts bearing upon the city. General Gillmore could have opened on the city with guns already in place, but he was waiting until his fortifications were perfected.<sup>6</sup>

On the morning of October 27, 1863, it became apparent that the batteries on Morris Island were ready to resume their work of destruction. For about 10:30 a.m. seven guns in Fort Wagner and four guns in Battery Gregg opened fire on the bridge that connected Sullivan's Island with the mainland.<sup>7</sup> And at about 11:00 a.m. on the same day the Central Battery, located between Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg, opened fire upon the

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<sup>5</sup>Samuel G. Stoney, South Carolina Low Country Historian, Charleston, South Carolina, in conversation of December, 1962.

<sup>6</sup>The Charleston Mercury. Tuesday, October 13, 1863, p. 2, Col. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Tuesday, October 27, 1863, p. 1, Col. 1.



city. Three shells entered the city, one passing through a vacant house (address unknown).<sup>8</sup> Another shell fell into the Union Bank Building. From the information gained, it would seem that all of the shells were incendiary shells and all of them failed to explode.<sup>9</sup> The Mercury reported the only casualties of the shelling of the 27th were the pigeons found dead and dying in the streets.<sup>10</sup> Although the shelling of October 27th did little damage to the city, it did notify the people of Charleston of the onslaught to come. With the action of October 27 the firing was suspended and not resumed again until November 16. The Union batteries were probably, experiencing some difficulty with the weather. October is one of the months when the sea islands along with South Carolina coast are buffeted by high winds, rough seas, and driving rains owing to the tropical storms that brew in the Atlantic.

On November 3 an interesting incident took place which involved a Charleston commission merchant, John Burckmeyer. Mr. Burckmeyer met Dr. Todd, President Lincoln's brother-in-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Wednesday, October 28, 1863, p. 2, Col. 1.

<sup>9</sup> J. F. Schirmer, The Schirmer Diary, 1861-1869, (South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina).

<sup>10</sup> The Charleston Mercury, October 21, 1863.

law, in a shop. Dr. Todd was serving as a doctor and officer in the Confederate Army. Mr. Burckmeyer had this to say about the man:

. . . and although a very good and efficient officer (as I learn) there is nothing about him that is prepossessing, and to my eye, he has all the encouthness and roughness which you would naturally attribute to Abe Lincoln's brother-in-law.<sup>11</sup>

The shelling of Charleston was resumed in full force on Monday, November 16. The shelling commenced at 10 a.m. and continued at regular intervals until 2 p.m.<sup>12</sup> A total of ten shells reached the city while five shells tripped and fell short.<sup>13</sup> Most of the shells fell around Broad Street. None fell north of Queen Street nor west of Meeting Street. John Burckmeyer was on Broad Street when the first shell fell. He relates that the first shell fell in St. Michael's Alley, another into the yard of Paul Brown on the corner of Broad and Church Street, and a third in the street in front of the bank of the state at the corner of State Street and Chalmers Street. Shells also fell in Vendue Range and Boyce's Wharf.<sup>14</sup> A. T. Smythe reported that a shell damaged a house on the corner

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<sup>11</sup> The Burckmeyer Letters. March, 1863. June, 1865 (Columbia: The State Co., 1926), p. 199.

<sup>12</sup> A. T. Smythe War Letters, November 18, 1863.

<sup>13</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. I, p. 686.

<sup>14</sup> Burckmeyer, op. cit., pp. 213-214.

of East Bay and Broad Streets. Two other shells damaged the City Hall. The telegraph office was damaged by a shell as was the North Wharf. And once again people were sent scurrying through the streets seeking safety.<sup>15</sup> The shells fired on that Monday were the incendiary Greek Fire. The shells must have failed to explode properly because the damage was reported as being rather mild, and the fear of the Greek Fire could be dismissed.<sup>16</sup>

On November 18 about ten shells fell in the city from the Union Batteries on Morris Island. Several shells fell in Queen Street, one fell at the corner of Queen and East Bay Streets, and another at Wilburs Corner.<sup>17</sup> For reasons unknown to me, no information was available on the damage done to the city on that day. On Thursday the 19th of November, the Yankee gunners were able to throw fifteen shells into the city. The bombardment started at half past eleven o'clock that morning and ceased at two the same afternoon. This same day had been set aside as a day of thanksgiving for the Confederate victory at Chickamauga, and when the shelling started, several of the churches were conducting services. When a shell struck very near City Hall, opposite St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Reverend

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<sup>15</sup> A. T. Smythe War Letters, November 18, 1863.

<sup>16</sup> Burckmeyer, op. cit., p. 214.

<sup>17</sup> Abbott and Puryear, op. cit., p. 172.



Smythe dismissed his congregation. The damage to City Hall was slight. However, while the congregation of St. Michael's was in flight a shell struck the Guard House, also on the corner of Broad Street and Meeting Street. From this time until the end of the war, St. Michaels was closed.<sup>18</sup> No one was injured by the shell that struck the Guard House, but two guardsmen were covered with dirt and debris from the large hole knocked in the east wall.<sup>19</sup> Another shell passed over the Scotch Church and went through the west wall of Bardot's yard, lodging itself in an out building of Judge Pringle's on Tradd Street.<sup>20</sup> Mr. Forrest, "the stubborn old Scotchman" who was the pastor of the "Scotch" Church, would not suspend the service but continued it to the end. The South Carolina Society Hall on Meeting Street suffered a direct hit which did considerable damage.<sup>21</sup> The shell that hit the South Carolina Hall was a shrapnel shell that burst and broke out the windows and peppered the walls with shrapnel.<sup>22</sup> An exploding shell also damaged

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<sup>18</sup>George W. William, St. Michael's Charleston, 1751-1951, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), p. 97.

<sup>19</sup>The A. T. Smythe War Letters, November 20, 1863.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., November 25, 1863.

<sup>21</sup>Burckmeyer, op. cit., p. 215.

<sup>22</sup>The A. T. Smythe War Letters, November 25, 1863.



the Hibernian Hall on Meeting Street opposite Chalmer's Street, but the shell was not a direct hit; therefore, the damage was not too extensive.<sup>23</sup> A shell fell into St. Phillip's Church yard on Church Street but did not explode. A shell also fell into a yard on Ladson's Court without exploding. The yard of Mrs. Barnwell's residence opposite 36 Meeting Street received a Yankee missile, and one or two shells landed in the vicinity of Legare and Lamboll Streets.<sup>24</sup>

The Yankee guns threw about twenty shells in the cradle of the rebellion at three different times during the day of November 20. The first time was at two o'clock in the morning, the second period of shelling was around ten a.m. on the 20th, and the city was shelled again that afternoon.<sup>25</sup> On Saturday, November 21, the gunners of the Federal Army fired about eighteen shots into the city between the hours of twelve and two p.m. and after sunset on the same day. The firing on Friday, November 20, began with a shell landing in the burned district near Clifford Street. Spectators, both male and female, anxious to survey the aftermath of the first shell on that Friday, scampered to the scene. However, within a few

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Saturday, November 21, 1863, p. 2, Col. 1.

minutes the curiosity of the people was somewhat diminished by a near burst. A shell burst in the street in front of the Euston's Furniture Store (at that time it was Silcox's) on the corner of Horlbeck's Alley and King Street, showering the spectators with dirt and dust.<sup>26</sup> On the same day, a shell knocked a hole in the building on the corner of Meeting Street and Market Street which housed Praue Boydston and Company. The Mill House, a hotel on the corner of Meeting Street and Queen Street, had several near misses which landed in the area destroyed by the great fire of 1861.<sup>27</sup> During the remaining bombardment of November 20 and Saturday, November 21, several buildings were damaged, and one person was killed. Saturday forenoon a shell landed in Beaufain Street near King Street killing a Negro woman that belonged to a Mrs. Lindsey. The old Negro was doing the wash when the Yankee projectile fell, knocking over a wall which killed the woman.<sup>28</sup> The most severely damaged building at this point was the house opposite Silcox's (Euston's) on the corner of Herlbeck's Alley and King Street. The house received two direct hits, one of which exploded inside the house causing a great deal of destruction.<sup>29</sup> Damage by Yankee shells was also suffered by Miles and Company's

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<sup>26</sup> Abbott and Puryear, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>27</sup> The A. T. Smythe War Letters, November 20, 1863.

<sup>28</sup> The Burckmeyer Letters, op. cit., pp. 216-217.

<sup>29</sup> The A. T. Smythe War Letters, November 25, 1863.

building on Chamberlain opposite the Charleston Hotel on Meeting Street. The home of Mrs. Geevenier on King Street, Lanneau's Store on Hayne Street, and the Camerons' old store were all damaged by falling shots.<sup>30</sup> As on every day of shelling, several shells fell in the burned district. The Union batteries on Morris Island suspended their fire during the night of November 21.<sup>31</sup> The bombardment was not resumed again until Friday, November 27.

Following the spirited and destructive fire of five days more people were leaving the areas which were under the fire. As of yet shells had not fallen north of Beaufain Street or west of St. Phillip's Street. Those with offices in the danger zone were moving them uptown. Lawyers, brokers, bankers, auctioneers, commissioned merchants, the tax office, loan office, etc. were all moving into offices out of the reach of the Yankee missiles of destruction.<sup>32</sup> The attitude of the populace under the destructive fire seemed to be one of contempt for the abolition army, and its attempt to bring Charleston to its knees. The following article appeared in The Charleston Mercury of November 24, 1863.

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<sup>30</sup>

The Burckmeyer Letters, op. cit., pp. 216-217.

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The Charleston Mercury, Monday, November 23, 1863, p. 2, Col. 1.

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The Burckmeyer Letters, op. cit., p. 217.



### The Bugbear Shelling

It is curious, as well as gratifying to see how coolly our citizens take the Yankee shelling of the city. The people go to and fro in the streets very much as usual. The ladies do not forego their usual promenades, and when a shell falls, the crowd gathers about the sullen monster, or watches its fragments, with a curiosity which is not in any whit lessened by their sense of danger. The young girls and boys, as they hear the whizzing, look up and cry, 'There it goes!' or 'Here it comes!' with a superb feeling of confidence in fate, if not with an absolute sense of superiority and contempt. When a house is struck, which is rather a rare thing, they examine the hole, and measure its dimensions, and even calculate the rate of progress which the enemy will make in shelling down our ancient city. They say 'at this rate it will require thirty guns constantly in play for three years to batter us into a cocked hat!' and with arithmetical philosophy they resume their shinny sticks, and go on with their game of golph or marbles, in spite of Gillmore and his guns. And so everywhere. If one or two small precincts are tabooed, the streets are everywhere else crowded with people. The ear is getting hourly more obtuse. Oysters in the shell produce a more lively sensation than shells of Greek fire; and forced meat balls awaken more earnest moods than balls that only seek to force our meat out of its proper shape and proportions. The ladies sit in their piazzas and watch the shells as they drop in the neighboring yard. The burnt district receives and quietly harbors one half of the missiles that fall among us; and except, in the business portions of the city, where the buildings are more dense, the damage is held to be mostly nominal. Our city is largely suburban in its residence, each dwelling having its own spacious lot or garden, that the chances are four to one in favor of the escape of the house, in whose precincts the shells may fall. Such is the present state of things. Of course, we do not expect it always to remain so. As the enemy shall, day by day, get new mortars or guns into position, the work will become hotter; but we doubt if that will make us cooler, or cool the courage which now cries out-----"Lay on MacDuff and damed be he who first cries 'Hold! Enough!'" 33

The people of Charleston were unshakeable in their determination to resist to the end the intimidation the old city was suffering at the hands of the Yankees. Determination, however, is little protection against the devastating Parrott guns. The upper sections of the city, which were out of the range of the Yankee guns, were crowded with the people forced out of their homes, lodgings or quarters in the sections under bombardment. The Charleston Mercury had, by the end of November, carried the notices of the moving of the offices of the public-serving institutions and professional men from their quarters in the bombarded regions of the city to safer locations out of the reach of the sieging pieces.<sup>34</sup>

The sieging pieces of artillery were not used against Charleston again until Friday, November 27. The weather was not conducive to the Union gunners. The freezing temperatures and very cold rain were keeping down the action.<sup>35</sup> The action began again about 11 a.m. on Friday, November 27, but did not last long. The firing halted about 11:30 a.m.<sup>36</sup> Within that half hour period five shells were thrown into the city.<sup>37</sup> Because of the rapidness of the fire it was assumed that more than one gun was firing on that day.<sup>38</sup> The only damage recorded as a result of the five shells of November 27 was the death of one old horse.<sup>39</sup> Horses in Charleston at this time were expensive and this was a loss for someone. On December 1, 1863, it was noted that horses were selling for \$1000 in Confederate paper money or about \$80 in gold.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The Charleston Mercury, November 23-30, 1863.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., December 1, 1863.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., November 28, 1863.

<sup>37</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. II, p. 686.

<sup>38</sup> The Charleston Mercury, November 28, 1863.

<sup>39</sup> The Burckmeyer Letters, op. cit. p. 218.

<sup>40</sup> D. E. Huger Smith, Alice Huger Smith and Arney Childs, eds. The Mason Smith Family Letters, 1860-1868, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950) p. 71.



After the firing on that cold Friday morning a young boy was seen collecting brass from the shell fragments to sell to a foundry.<sup>41</sup> This was to become an enterprising business for the youngsters of the streets in Charleston. Whole bands of young boys with shovels, picks and various other instruments of labor were seen prowling the streets, waiting for a shell to land. When a shell fell they rushed to the scene, and if it did not explode they would dig it out of the ground and cart it off to a foundry. If the shell exploded they would round up as many of the fragments as possible. The most valuable piece of all was the brass band around the shell from a rifled artillery piece. The rewarding nature of this business venture soon brought competition into the streets. The rivalry reached such a peak that the competing boys would, upon the sound of the oncoming shell, race to the approximated target. As the contests intensified and the boys grew able to judge with more accuracy the exact landing site of the shells, some were getting to the target ahead of the shell and were getting their "craniums cracked."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>The Charleston Mercury, November 28, 1863.

<sup>42</sup>Mr. Samuel G. Stoney, the South Carolina Historian, in a conversation in December, 1962.



At the end of November the bombardment of the old city had not yet reached the intensity that it would assume within the next four weeks. But the pattern for the fall of Charleston could already be seen. What John Shirmer wrote in his diary about the condition of the city for the month of November is revealing.

... Within the last week they are occasionally shelling the city, up to this time not much damage has been done, they appear to take St. Michael's steeple as their target as a large number of shells have fell in that neighborhood. The lower part of the city is perfectly deserted and all the Banks, Public Offices, and Post Office have moved above Calhoun Street. The highest part where a shell reached was in Wentworth up Meeting and in Lynch Street near Salter's Work Shop--Our news from the West is far from being encouraging and in Virginia we are doing nothing. Appearance blackens more and more every day and provisions and extortion and oppression increasing daily; Our friends at home are whipping us as badly as the Yankees are doing it to our armies and we will never be able to get out of all the trouble. ---the Lord help us by some interpretation of his Mercy and Goodwill.<sup>43</sup>

While the future of the city of Charleston was in doubt, the intention of General Gillmore to batter the city either into submission or into oblivion could not be mistaken. For on December 1, 1863, the city was once again the recipient of the Yankee missiles of destruction. At about half past twelve Tuesday morning eleven shells were thrown at the city. Eight shells reached the city and three fell short.

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<sup>43</sup> J. F. Schirmer, op. cit., November, 1863.

At 4:20 that same afternoon the fire was resumed, and sixteen more shells fell in the city.<sup>44</sup> Most of the shells fired on Monday fell around Cumberland Street, but some fell in Tradd Street near Legare Street. One shell burst in St. Mary's Church Yard on Hazel Street. A fragment from this one struck a coffee pot being held by a man without hurting the man at all.<sup>45</sup> Mrs. Hawthorne of 70 Church Street was seriously wounded by a shell fragment which struck her on the left side of her head and fractured her skull.<sup>46</sup> She lived, however, for about six weeks before passing away.<sup>47</sup> On Wednesday, December 2, at about two p.m. the Union batteries commenced firing again, but only six shells were thrown into the city. All of the shells landed around Southern Wharf doing very little damage. The Confederate batteries on James Island returned the fire from Battery Gregg and with this the Union batteries ceased firing.<sup>48</sup>

On Thursday, December 3, at about 3 a.m., the Union Army opened a heavy fire upon Charleston. From the simultaneous nature of bursts it was apparent that at least three

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<sup>44</sup>The Charleston Mercury, Wednesday, December 2, 1863.

<sup>45</sup>The A. T. Smythe War Letters, December 2, 1863.

<sup>46</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, December 2, 1863; The Charleston Mercury, December 3, 1863.

<sup>47</sup>Off. Rec., Series I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. II, p. 683.

<sup>48</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, December 3, 1863.

one hundred pound Parrott cannons were firing. A total of thirty-two shells landed in the city.<sup>49</sup> Governor Allston's house was struck by a shell which burst inside of the house doing a great deal of damage. A second shell landed in the Allston's garden, and a third shell landed in the adjacent Price's Alley. Another shell struck a small double tenement house on Water Street, one door from Meeting Street, blowing it into splinters. A shell also passed through the house of Maum Hargraves, a Negro woman, and tore up the sidewalk in front of her house. A shell tore a large hole in the street at the corner of Tradd and Church Streets.<sup>50</sup> One shell fell in the Dessaussure's yard on Meeting Street. The home of Captain Labane up over the China Shop was severely damaged by an exploding shell. Another shell landed, apparently without bursting, in the Barker's lot adjacent to number thirty-six Meeting Street.<sup>51</sup> No one was injured by the firing of December 3. The incendiary, Greek Fire, was not used on that day; the only shells fired were explosive fragment shells. The fire of the Union guns from Gregg was returned by the Rebel guns on James Island.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>The Charleston Mercury, December 4, 1863.

<sup>50</sup>The A. T. Smythe War Letters, December 8, 1863.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., December 6, 1863.

<sup>52</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, December 4, 1863.



After the Union Army ceased firing on December 3 the bombardment of the city was not reopened until Wednesday, December 9. In this period of quiet, heavy construction work was being carried out at both Fort Wagner and Battery Wagner. New embrasures were being constructed at both installations. The interval of quiet was broken on Wednesday, December 9, 1863, between the hours of four and five in the afternoon. The firing was done by three guns from Battery Wagner. Eight shells landed in the city within the hour that the Union batteries fired.<sup>53</sup> The Yankee guns opened again Thursday night at about ten o'clock. Five more shells landed in the beleagured city. Two shells landed near the corner of Broad and King Streets. The house opposite Orange Street (whether on Broad Street or Tradd Street I could not determine) sustained a direct hit from a Yankee shell.<sup>54</sup> Three rooms on the back of the Mill's House, a hotel located at the corner of Meeting Street and Broad Street, were damaged by a direct hit, but no one was injured. The Grimball's residence on Meeting Street sustained damage from a Yankee missile of destruction. The Guard House on the corner of

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<sup>53</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, December 10, 1863.

<sup>54</sup>Abbott and Puryear, op. cit., p. 175.

Broad Street and Meeting Street also had in its cellar an unwelcomed visitor from a Yankee gun on Morris Island.<sup>55</sup>

Beginning late Thursday night and extending into Friday afternoon the Yankee batteries fired nine shells into the old city at irregular intervals.<sup>56</sup> Not much damage was done by these shells. One landed at the corner of Beaufain Street and Pitt Street. Another landed in the intersection of Rutledge Avenue and Beaufain Street. A third shell landed in Elliott Street near Church Street, and the fourth came down in Vendue Range.<sup>57</sup>

For the next fourteen days the Union Army was engaged in construction on their batteries, so the action became somewhat spasmodic and never too heavy. Between eleven and twelve Saturday night the Union batteries opened upon the city throwing, in a very short period of time, twelve shells. The shells thrown contained Greek Fire but it was once again a failure. Not much damage was done, and no one was injured. From the rapidness of the fire it was estimated that four Parrott guns were firing. The next day, Sunday, four more shells landed in the city between the hours of two and three

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<sup>55</sup> The A. T. Smythe War Letters, December 10, 1863.

<sup>56</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Saturday, December 12, 1863.

<sup>57</sup> The A. T. Smythe War Letters, Friday, December 11, 1863.

in the afternoon.<sup>58</sup> The shelling was not resumed again until Tuesday, December 15, at about eleven o'clock in the morning. Fourteen shells were thrown into the city on this day, and as was to be the usual pattern, the Confederate batteries on James Island fired upon the Union batteries on Morris Island.<sup>59</sup> Some buildings were struck doing limited damage and injuring no one.<sup>60</sup> The next night just before midnight a great cannonade opened between the opposing batteries.<sup>61</sup> The city, however, was somewhat neglected. Only four shells were fired at the city, and they did no damage at all.<sup>62</sup> On Friday morning between ten and eleven o'clock one gun on Cumming's Point opened fire and threw four shells, and again that afternoon five more shells fell into the city. The Union Army was still engaged in work on their batteries.<sup>63</sup> Saturday, December 20, at about twelve midnight, the Union guns opened again and threw twelve shells into the city. This bombardment was followed, Sunday afternoon, by a firing that sent twenty shells into the city. On Sunday afternoon three guns were firing at the city, and the fire was returned

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<sup>58</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Monday, December 14, 1863.

<sup>59</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Wednesday, December 16, 1863.

<sup>60</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Wednesday, December 16, 1863.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Thursday, December 17, 1863.

<sup>62</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Friday, December 18, 1863.

<sup>63</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Saturday, December 19, 1863.



by the Confederate batteries on James Island. Because of the work being done on Battery Gregg and Fort Wagner the firing was spasmodic. The flanks of Battery Gregg were being extended, and Fort Wagner was being sodded.<sup>64</sup> The shells were landing mostly around Broad Street and Tradd Street. Occasionally, shells were landing as far up Meeting Street as the Charleston Hotel and Market Street. Many of the business establishments in that area had been damaged by the shells, but only two were injured.<sup>65</sup> Tuesday, December 23, saw only six shells thrown into the city, and Thursday, Christmas Eve, was a day of peace and quiet for the city under the gun. The Yankees were still working on Battery Gregg.<sup>66</sup>

Christmas Day was only one hour old when the monsters of war once again spit forth their deadly destructive missiles. Five guns at Battery Wagner, one gun on Cumming's Point and one mortar from a battery east of Gregg participated in the bombardment.<sup>67</sup> The shelling had just begun when at 1:10 a.m. a fire broke out in the office of Brown and Porter on the north side of Broad Street near Church Street. Because of

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., Monday, December 21, 1863.

<sup>65</sup> The Burckmeyer Letters, pp. 236-237.

<sup>66</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, December 23 and 24, 1863.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Monday, December 28, 1863.

high winds on the cold Christmas morning the fire gained quite a bit of headway before the Fire Department arrived on the scene.<sup>68</sup> The building housing Brown and Porter's office and the next house were completely destroyed by the fire. The high wind carried sparks down Church Street and ignited the Cotton Press located on the west side of Church Street between St. Michael's Alley and Tradd Street and the adjacent house on the southern corner of St. Michael's Alley and Church Street. Both the Cotton Press and the nearby house were destroyed by the fire. A house on Tradd Street was also ignited but the fire was suppressed before this house was consumed. The fire bell was answered by men of the Charleston Fire Engine Company. When the fire continued to make headway 200 men of the First Regiment State Troops, a detachment from Companies A and D of the First Regiment South Carolina Artillery, were ordered out to help combat the fire. While the fire was raging a Yankee gun fired into the city in an attempt to hinder the fire fighters. Several shells landed in the immediate area of the fire. The impeding fire from the Union batteries wounded five of the fire fighters. Jerry Murray, a member of the Charleston Fire Engine Company, was struck in the leg by a flying brick;

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<sup>68</sup>The Burckmeyer Letters, p. 238.

four members of the First State Regiment were wounded, Sargeant H. P. McClemons was wounded on the left arm by a stone fragment; Private Thomas R. Brown was struck on the arm by a stone fragment; Private Thomas R. Brown was struck on the right hip and neck by stone fragments; Private E. Ballinger suffered a flesh wound on his thigh and another on his arm; W. Meadows (rank unknown), was struck and suffered a contusion of the thigh. Two people, a man and a woman, residing in a house on the corner of Market and Meeting Streets were also injured by shell fragments. The man, Mr. William Knighton, eighty-three years old, was struck by a shell fragment below his right knee severing the rest of the leg from his body. He died on Monday, December 28. The woman was Miss Plane, the sister-in-law of Mr. Knighton; her left foot was crushed by a fragment and died on Wednesday, December 30. John Doscher of the German Fire Company also died as the result of a wound. Mr. Doscher was struck down by a shell fragment while fighting the fire of December 25 and died somewhat later.<sup>69</sup>

On that cold Christmas Day in 1863, 150 shells were thrown at the city, but sixteen fell short and 134 reached the city. It was the heaviest shelling the city had received

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<sup>69</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. II, pp. 684-685.



up to this time. The intervals between shots were irregular, and sometimes there were as many as five shells landing in quick succession.<sup>70</sup> Before the firing on that Christmas Day stopped at twelve noon, several houses had been struck and damaged, but the destruction and injury was not as great as one would assume when considering the great number of shells landing in the cradle of rebellion. The lack of total ruination as a result of the heavy bombardment can be attributed to the fact that many of the pernicious missiles did not burst but buried themselves harmlessly in yards, gardens, vacant lots, streets or in the burned section of the city.<sup>71</sup>

The old city was allowed to enjoy the day after Christmas; because the gunners bent on destruction of the Charleston did not launch their noisome missiles on the 26th day of December. On Sunday, December 27, at three o'clock, four shells were thrown in a very short time. No damage was reported.<sup>72</sup> However, the somewhat peaceful Sunday was not without its occurrences. At one o'clock Sunday afternoon the tranquility was suddenly shattered by an explosion. The location of the explosion was the corner of St. Michael's

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<sup>70</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Monday, December 28, 1863.

<sup>71</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Monday, December 28, 1863.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Alley and Church Street, the scene of the injurious fire of Christmas Day. Three men were attempting to disarm two unexploded shells when one shell detonated, and it in turn detonated a second shell. One of the men, Frank Gilles, had his left leg and arm blown off, his thighs badly mangled, and was wounded about the head. He died at four o'clock that same afternoon. A second man known only as Johnson had his right arm and leg severed by the explosion. He did not die, however. A third man, whose name was not known was severely wounded, but he also survived the accident.<sup>73</sup>

The weather of the closing weeks of 1863 was rainy, windy and very cold. Therefore, except for the heavy bombardment on December 25, the siege of the city was going slowly. On Monday, December 28, between the hours of ten and eleven five shells struck in the city. No damage was reported.<sup>74</sup> The city was shelled at two different times on Tuesday. Between two and three in the afternoon ten shells fell and between six and seven that evening twelve more shells landed in the city. Again no damage of any consequence was reported. On Tuesday at ten in the morning

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Tuesday, December 28, 1863.

a funeral was held for Mr. Knighton who died as a result of the wound he sustained in the bombardment of December 25.<sup>75</sup> Light shelling of the historic city continued on Wednesday and Thursday. Only seven Yankee missiles landed in the city on Wednesday, and they all landed between five and seven o'clock in the morning. At three o'clock Thursday afternoon, a funeral was held for Miss Plane, who had died as a result of the wound she sustained in the Christmas Day barrage.<sup>76</sup> On the last day of December, Thursday, at about ten a.m., the Yankee guns threw six shells into the city but did not do enough damage to be reported.<sup>77</sup>

As of January 1, 1864, four hundred and forty-nine (449) Union shells had fallen into the city where the first shots of the conflict had been fired. Due to the fact that about forty-two per cent of the shells did not burst on landing, burying themselves harmlessly in yards, gardens, vacant lots or deserted houses and landing in the burned district, an accurate tabulation of the shells landing in the city is difficult to obtain. Major Henry Bryan of the Confederate Army reported that he could find the location

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<sup>75</sup>The Charleston Mercury, Tuesday, December 29, 1863; The Charleston Daily Courier, Tuesday, December 29, 1863.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., Thursday, December 31, 1863.

<sup>77</sup>The Charleston Mercury, Friday, January 1, 1864.



where only 225 shells fell in the city. One hundred twenty-six buildings (including kitchens) had been struck by the Yankee shells, and of the 126, forty-one of the buildings were slightly damaged. Beginning January 1 the Union gunners commenced sending their shells further up in the city. They shifted their line of fire from St. Michael's Steeple to St. Phillip's Steeple. Since November 17, the majority of the shells thrown into Charleston were from a 100 pound Parrott cannon. After the explosion of the Swamp Angel a 200 pound Parrott cannon was not used in shelling of the city.<sup>78</sup>

A severe storm which began New Year's Eve and lasted through Friday, New Year's Day, and so the shelling of the city did not resume until Sunday, January 3, 1864. Saturday the temperature was below freezing all day and the Yankee work crews were busy repairing their batteries after the storm of Thursday and Friday.<sup>79</sup> Between three and four Sunday afternoon twelve more missiles of destruction were sent into the city. A shift in the line of fire extended the area in which the shells fell further into the city. One shell fell in the Farrar's yard at 28 Society Street. This was the first time a shell had falled this far into

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<sup>78</sup>Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. II, pp. 683-684.

<sup>79</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, Monday, January 4, 1864.

the city since the firing in August.<sup>80</sup> The damage in the city was slight, as half of the shells failed to explode. Sunday night was foggy and rainy, therefore the shelling was not resumed until ten p.m. Monday. One shell was thrown every half hour until about six a.m. Tuesday. A total of sixteen shells landed in Charleston.<sup>81</sup> There was no damage reported. The cold, windy, rainy weather halted the bombardment, and it was not resumed until Sunday, January 10.<sup>82</sup> That day had just begun when the Yankee guns opened. The bombardment continued until daylight with a total of eighteen shells fired into the city. Again Sunday afternoon the weapons of destruction threw twenty-eight more shells into the city. A single shell was sent into Charleston Sunday night totaling forty-six shells from the Yankee guns on Sunday.<sup>83</sup> On Monday the twelfth day of January 10 shells were fired into the old city. The damage to property was "inconsiderable."<sup>84</sup> Beginning at five p.m. Monday the Union batteries battered the city unceasingly for the next ten days. From five p.m. Monday until five-thirty p.m. Friday, January 22, the Union batteries threw 1,460 shells

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<sup>80</sup>The Burckmeyer Letters, p. 240.

<sup>81</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, Tuesday and Wednesday, January 4 and 5, 1864.

<sup>82</sup>The Charleston Mercury, Monday, January 11, 1864.

<sup>83</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, Monday, January 11, 1864.

<sup>84</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, Tuesday, January 12, 1864.

at Charleston.<sup>85</sup> Observers reported that 533 of these shells fell short, which would mean that a staggering 927 shot successfully landed in the city.<sup>86</sup> Two guns were doing most of the firing - a 100 pound Parrott gun and a small Waird Rifle cannon.<sup>87</sup> The intervals between shells varied from five to twenty minutes, however, the overall average for the entire ten days of shelling was about one shell every ten minutes. During the heavy bombardment the local papers did not list the damage to property but referred to the amount of damage as "usual." From information gathered, the immense total of shells thrown, and the damage from former bombardments, I surmise that the damage was considerable from the standpoint of the civilian property holders. Because of the increase in the number of the shells being thrown into the city the downtown area of Charleston was devoid of people. Therefore, eyewitness accounts of the damage were not kept daily, and the only accounts available were composite resumes of the damage. Shells fell in John's Street east of Meeting Street, in Charlotte Street and at the corner of

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<sup>85</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier and The Charleston Mercury, Tuesday, January 12, 1864, to Saturday, January 23, 1864.

<sup>86</sup> Off. Rec., Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, pt. II, p. 686.

<sup>87</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Thursday, January 14, 1864.



Calhoun Street and Meeting Street.<sup>88</sup> While an occasional shell fell in Calhoun Street, which is much farther up in the city than the former barrages, reached the usual limit of the shelling was Society Street. The Farrars' house at 28 Society Street was hit twice by shells. Dr. Phillip's residence at 44 Beaufain Street had a Yankee visitor bury itself in the yard.<sup>89</sup> The Daily Courier reported on Wednesday, January 20, 1864, that a local church (no name was given) sustained a direct hit which exploded in the following manner:

One shell entered a small church, not prominate, [sic] and nearly destroyed and obliterated a copy of a book once held in some esteem by the settlers of New England and New York. He [General Gillmore] has deminished our stock of Bibles by virtually destroying one copy. Let some torn and tattered fragments be kept and some sent to the British and Foreign Bible Society, The American Bible Society and other institutions of the sort, as a memorial of Yankee warfare.

The ancestors of Yankees since the days of Cain have endeavored to wipe out from the Bible certain stringent laws against murder, and theft, and bearing false witness, and opveleusness. We believe the Bible shall prevail even against 'the gates of Hell,' and God helping us we intend to keep our Bible banner, which we have set up in his name.<sup>90</sup>

Friday, January 15, James Adger's kitchen and stables on Meeting Street near Water Street burned at a considerable

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<sup>88</sup> Abbott and Puryear, eds., op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>89</sup> The Burckmeyer Letters, p. 241.

<sup>90</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Wednesday, January 20, 1863.

loss.<sup>91</sup> The source of this information gave no cause for the fire, but because of the heaviness of the shelling it is my opinion that fire was more the result of a shell than the act of a human who would be risking his life to enter this area of the city. Fortunately only three individuals were wounded in the heaviest bombardment of the city since the shelling commenced in August, 1863. A German immigrant, name unknown, was struck in the right hand by a stone fragment as the result of shells bursting in the street on Wednesday, January 13.<sup>92</sup> On Wednesday, January 20, a private in an artillery company, the Gist Guard, was slightly wounded by a shell burst. A Negro was also slightly wounded by the same shell burst.<sup>93</sup> A freak accident occurred at the Adger's fire on the sixteenth of January. Fireman Thomas S. Sigwald was wounded in the right leg by a pistol shot from his own gun. While he was busy fighting the fire his pistol which was stuck in his belt accidentally discharged leaving Mr. Sigwald with a flesh wound.<sup>94</sup> On the morning of the final day of the heavy shelling, Thursday, January 22, 1864, several experimental shots were fired at Charleston. Shells were

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<sup>91</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Saturday, January 16, 1864.

<sup>92</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Thursday, January 14, 1864.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., Friday, January 22, 1863.

<sup>94</sup> The Charleston Mercury, Saturday, January 16, 1864.

sent into the city with time fuses so that they would explode before impact and thus spray larger areas with shell fragments.<sup>95</sup> However, after two hours had elapsed the Union gunners returned to the usual type of shell.

After five-thirty Friday afternoon only eleven shells were thrown at the old city.<sup>96</sup> One reason I can put forth for the reduction in the number of shells thrown at the city is that the batteries were having difficulty getting from the storage areas needed ammunition to the guns. The Union army had been working industriously for several days to keep the batteries supplied with ammunition, but the firing of the Confederate batteries on James Island was directed against the working parties.<sup>97</sup> The batteries were probably running dangerously low in the amount of ammunition on hand. For the next nine days the bombardment of Charleston dropped off considerably. Only seventy-one shells were fired at Charleston from Thursday, January 21 until Saturday night, January 30. From Thursday afternoon to Friday afternoon, as already stated, only eleven shells were thrown.<sup>98</sup> Friday

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., Friday, January 22, 1863.

<sup>96</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Friday, January 22, 1864.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., Wednesday, January 20, 1863.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., Friday, January 22, 1864.



night, January 20, and Saturday saw only nine shells fall into the city. And in the corresponding time Saturday night and Sunday fifteen more shots fell into Charleston.<sup>99</sup> On Saturday night a 100 pound Parrott shell fell through the roof of an occupied home and exploded in the lower floor. On the way to the lower floor it passed through an occupied bedroom without injuring anyone. The exploding shell did considerable damage to the house, but, miraculously, no one was injured.<sup>100</sup> From Sunday night to Tuesday night only thirty-one shells were fired at Charleston. The city was allowed a day of rest, for after ceasing fire on Tuesday the firing was not resumed again until eight-thirty (8:30) Wednesday night. And then the shelling lasted only until half past one Thursday morning. During this five hour period only five shells struck the city. The shelling was again discontinued until nine p.m. Saturday, January 30. During the entire period observers reported that the Union forces on Morris Island were busy moving ammunition up to the batteries on Cumming's Point.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>The Charleston Mercury, Saturday, January 23, 1864, and Monday, January 25, 1864.

<sup>100</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, Monday, January 25, 1864.

<sup>101</sup>The Charleston Daily Courier, Tuesday, January 25, to Monday, February 1, 1864.

At nine o'clock Saturday night, January 30, the Yankee guns opened up again. The fire was heavy and rapid. By five-thirty Sunday afternoon the villains, as Charlestonians called the Union gunners, had poured one hundred and one shells into Charleston. By five-thirty Monday afternoon the Union guns had sent a hundred more shots into Charleston, setting the total number for the past forty-eight hours at 201 shells. Sunday night the Morrissey family had a narrow escape from the clutches of death. At about nine-thirty a shell entered their home from the South side upper story, passed through a bedroom, smashing a table and the foot of a bed occupied by two sleeping adults. The shell passed on into the cellar where it exploded. The explosion tore a large hole in the cellar, and scattered fragments and dust in all directions. None of the sleeping family were hurt although they were covered with dust and enveloped in smoke. In the same two days of bombardment a white woman was struck by a flying brick as a result of a shell explosion, and a white man was struck in an ankle by a shell fragment.<sup>102</sup> At five-thirty Monday afternoon a shell set fire to the buildings occupied by Ingraham Webb and some others on Commerical Northwest Wharf. The Wharf and the whole range

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<sup>102</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Tuesday, February 2, 1864.

area was consumed by the fire.<sup>103</sup> From five-thirty Monday to five-thirty Tuesday the old city had received 136 Yankee shells. No one was injured and there was the "usual amount of damage" to the city. Tuesday afternoon at about one o'clock there was an explosion in the William S. Henery and Company Foundry on Meeting Street near Line Street. Six Negroes were disarming unexploded shells and while testing one with a hot wire it exploded. Benjamin Martin a free Negro was killed by the blast. William, a slave belonging to Mr. T. P. O'Neal, was wounded quite seriously in both legs. Jackson, a slave belonging to S. F. Scanlon, was slightly injured. Anthony, another slave belonging to W. W. Riley, was only slightly wounded. Two free Negroes known only as Wilson and Wheeler were slightly wounded in the explosion.<sup>104</sup> From Tuesday evening, February 2, to Friday evening, February 5, a total of 300 shells were thrown into Charleston. One hundred thirty-five of the shells came in from Tuesday through Wednesday with a noticeable reduction on the following two days. The Yankees were once again working industriously to get shells and powder up to the Cumming's Point batteries.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> J. F. Schirmer, op. cit., February, 1864.

<sup>104</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, Wednesday, February 3, 1864.

<sup>105</sup> The Charleston Mercury, from Thursday, February 4, to Saturday, February 6, 1864.



On Friday, February 5, Augustine T. Smythe wrote a letter describing some of the damage the Union batteries had inflicted upon Charleston. According to Mr. Smythe, the Smythe home on Legare Street had sustained a direct hit which had entered the house from the roof and burst in the entry. The explosion shattered glass and plaster. Most of the houses in that neighborhood had the glass broken from exploding shells. Another shell had fallen in the garden of the Legare Street house, but it failed to explode. The Smythe home at 36 Meeting Street had been struck seven times. One shell had exploded within the house itself. Another shell explosion completely demolished the green house. Mr. Smythe goes on to relate that all the houses in the neighborhood had been hit often by the missiles of destruction.<sup>106</sup> The Guard House at the corner of Meeting and Broad Streets had received another direct hit on the Meeting Street side, making a total of four direct hits. The Lecture Room of the Baptist Church on Church Street was the recipient of a shell; four other shells had gone into its graveyard. St. Michael's on the corner opposite the Guard House had not been struck yet, but six shells had landed in her graveyard and two more had struck the pavement

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<sup>106</sup> The A. T. Smythe War Letters, February 5, 1864.

outside of the church. The buildings most damaged to this time was Harrod's Store on the corner of Hazel Street and Meeting Street. It was very badly shot up.<sup>107</sup>

The Union batteries were silent from Friday night until Sunday evening. The Union Army work parties were busy moving ammunition up to Cumming's Point and doing construction work on Cumming's Point and Battery Gregg. Sunday night seventeen more shells were thrown into Charleston. Only four shells were sent into the "dear old city" from Monday morning up to five-thirty Wednesday afternoon. And eleven more shells were sent into Charleston from Wednesday afternoon to Thursday afternoon. Thursday night saw only four more shells fired into battered Charleston.<sup>108</sup> With the end of firing Thursday night the nursery of rebellion was allowed to languish in peace and quiet until Sunday evening about nine o'clock. At that hour the bombardment was resumed and up to Monday night twenty-two more Yankee shells were let loose upon Charleston. The shelling continued at a slow pace through Tuesday and Wednesday with only eighteen shells being thrown at the city. The Union Army was still busy working on the embrasures of

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., February 7, 1864.

<sup>108</sup> The Charleston Daily Courier, from Saturday, February 6, 1864, to Saturday, February 13, 1864.

Cumming's Point and Battery Gregg. Wednesday evening saw a sudden increase in the action, and in the next twenty-four hours ninety-eight shots were fired at the city, many of which fell short. At about seven o'clock Thursday evening a strong easterly wind brought snow to Charleston. It snowed for about two hours and covered everything under a white blanket. The cold weather did not deter the Yankee gunners from their task for they continued to fire their weapons of destruction and vengeance. From Thursday evening to Friday evening they threw 117 more shells at Charleston. And in the corresponding time period on Friday and Saturday the Union gunners fired 112 more shells into Charleston. In the last fifty-three hours of the first six months of the bombardment of old Charleston the Union guns threw a total of 278 shells at the city.<sup>109</sup>

At the end of the first six months Charleston was under bombardment 1,775 Union shells successfully reached and landed in the city. While some could call the damage inflicted upon the nursery of disunion as "inconsiderable," I cannot help but feel that the results produced by seventeen months of shelling were not "inconsiderable."

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., from Tuesday, February 16, 1864, to Monday February 22, 1864.



The bombardment of Charleston lasted until February 18, 1865. And when the historic city finally capitulated on February 18, 1865, it was not due to the incessant presence of the Yankee missiles of destruction, but rather the movement of General William T. Sherman from Savannah, Georgia, to the very heart of South Carolina, Columbia. General Sherman elected to move against Columbia instead of Charleston, because by this maneuver he made Charleston untenable and ready to fall into the hands of General Gillmore's forces.<sup>110</sup> The bombardment that was initiated in August of 1863 to force the surrender of Fort Sumter and Charleston failed to meet its objective. The bombardment did, however, have very definite effects upon the War itself as well as upon Charleston. Fort Sumter was completely demolished by the Yankee guns. And the same Union guns brought to a halt the blockade running into Charleston. Previous to the siege of Charleston the Union naval blockade was violated almost daily. Also the accuracy and effectiveness of the heavy Parrott rifle was a contributing factor in the European nations' unwillingness to intervene in the American Civil War.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Johnson Hagood, Memories of the War of Secession (Columbia: The State Company, 1910), p. 120.

<sup>111</sup> C. C. Hazewell, "The Beginning of the End," The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. XIII (January, 1864), pp. 114-115.

While the seventeen month siege of Charleston was a failure from a military viewpoint it certainly had its effect upon the city and its people. At the end of the Civil War the southern section of Charleston was empty of life and nothing stirred.<sup>112</sup> The Yankee shells had fallen so thickly that the lower section of the old city was unsafe for habitation. The damage to property was quite extensive.

The city of Charleston itself was a mournful [sic] spectacle. The wharves were rotting, the waterfront resembled a tangled, marsh, grass grew in the leading streets, and blackened walls and chimnies stood as monuments of the terrible fires of 1861 and 1865 over water filled cellars yawning like graves.<sup>113</sup>

As well as damaging the city quite extensively the heavy Union guns brought about a change in the way of life of the people of Charleston. Many people fled the beleaguered city but many others remained in Charleston. Those that stayed in the city moved to the upper regions of the city. The Yankee shells never fell higher in the city than Calhoun Street. When the businesses and people of the shelled area moved their offices and residences into the safe upper regions of the city this section soon became over crowded. Mrs. Pauline Dufort who had a home in upper Charleston out of

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<sup>112</sup> George W. Williams, St. Michael's Charleston, 1751-1951 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), p. 99.

<sup>113</sup> David D. Wallace, South Carolina, A Short History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1951) pp. 546-547.

range of the Yankee shells provided quarters for her own family as well as for a paralytic gentleman and his wife who lived in her parlor and a lady and her daughter who lived in one of her bedrooms.<sup>114</sup> During the bombardment the city and particularly the shelled areas became very lawless. As early as January 9, 1864, robberies and assaults were almost a nightly occurrence.<sup>115</sup> Houses and yards were stripped of everything of any value. Lead pipes were dug up, copper pumps were carried off, and even door knobs and locks were taken. Anything that could be sold was stolen. No one dared to venture out into the streets at night unless they carried a gun.<sup>116</sup>

The Federal Army and their deadly weapons did not bring Charleston to its knees, but it did for all times leave its mark upon the city by the sea.

<sup>114</sup> Our Women in the War (Charleston: The News and Courier Book Press, 1885), p. 50.

<sup>115</sup> The A. T. Smythe War Letters, January 9, 1864.

<sup>116</sup> W. G. Peek, "Four Years Under Fire at Charleston," Harper's Monthly Magazine, Vol. 31, 1865, p. 365.



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